

One of the most outstanding was the church services which were held in the dining room of the building.

In 1884 a public school was opened in a building formerly used as land office. It was situated east of where Dr. Martin lives. This building was used for two years. In this school house a teacher's examination was held. Among the persons who took this examination was Mr. K. M. Foot who afterwards taught in a country school.

In 1886 a large building was built and in 1922 the present brick structure was erected. In the second building the lower room was used for a school and the upper room was used for church services, Ladies' Aid meetings, Masonic gatherings, and various other entertainments and social affairs.

The third and fourth year of the public school, country children were brought in and the school numbered between 68 and 70 children. All of these were crowded into one room and one teacher was to, properly, teach them, receiving a salary of about 35 dollars per month.

This was a hard task because most of them came from different states, had different books, some having none at all and with many different classifications as to grades.

The settlers, of course, had thrilling experiences. None of the inhabitants had cars or had even seen one, but there was a rumor that a car was going through. The people all gathered in what was then main street to see the great novelty which it indeed, proved to be at this particular time. Although the car went only about five or ten miles an hour people stood back in order to give it plenty of room.

Another story is also told about a cyclone. Two or three men who were working on a well jumped into the well so that they might be sheltered from the storm. A little while later one of the men climbed to the top and peered over, "The town has been swept away," he told his fellow-men, after a long gaze. One of the other men then climbed up to look. "Why," he said, "you were looking north instead of south; the town is still standing." This was the laugh of the town for a couple of weeks.

This information was received from an old settler, Miss C. M. Hall of Harrold.

Notes From Early Records-In Superintendent's Office

1902-Class Motto-"Will find a way, or make one."

1901-Hattie Pietrus, Buckeye, received perfect attendance certificate.

1902-Perfect Attendance

Everett Schumacher

Martin Samuelson

Albert, John, and Ida Westlund

Peter and Otto Lindbloom

Gilbert Pearson

Marion Ihli

1903-Class Motto-"I can and I will."

Only two 8th grade graduates, Lillie Pearson and Robert Riggs.

1904-Louisana Purchase Centennial Exposition at St. Louis-Excerpt from notice of S. D. World's Fair Commission.

"A great portion of the people of this nation look upon South Dakota as the home of the Indian, the cowboy and the outlaw, and wonder if we have any churches or schools. The great exposition will be an opportunity to show to all that in education, as well as the production of fine crops, South Dakota stands in the front line."

1906-Class Motto-"Be ready."

1906-Since last legislature added to the requirements for teacher's certificates a knowledge of S. D. history, the announcement that the American Book Co. has just issued "A Brief History of South Dakota," a little volume from the pen of Doane Robinson will be of special interest.

1906-Revised Course of Study.

1906-System of Ethical Training in Public Schools Adopted--
"South Dakota is the first state in the union to adopt the system of moral and ethical training."

1906-Pres. Theodore Roosevelt causes furor by directing that 300 simplified spelling words recommended by the Carnegie committee be used in printing of public documents.

Here are a few: dasht, catalog, judgment, blusht, deprest, kist, claspt, drest, mama.

1906-Agitation for perfect universal language-Esperanto.

1906-Hans A. Ustrud-State Superintendent.

190⁷-Supt. Ida Hatch of Hughes Co., issued a call for 20 teachers needed to fill vacancies in the county.

BLUNT EARLY DAY HAPPENINGS

History of Blunt

By Virginia Leeper

The town of Blunt is located in northern Hughes County and was named after Mr. John E. Blunt, chief engineer for the Chicago and Northwestern railway when the railroad was first laid through this territory. It is situated in a beautiful valley which is traversed by Medicine Creek, and is famous for its fertile soil. When the valley was first settled it contained only the "Lone Tree," but possesses at the present time more trees than any other townsite in the county.

Few towns of its size can boast so varied and interesting a history as this one. The story of this settlement presents in an unusual way the panorama of events usually associated with a pioneer settlement. The rapid growth of the great central region of the United States, the great westward migration of population, the magnitude of which had never before been equaled in history is portrayed in small degree in the story of this one settlement.

The first record of the town dates back to 1880, the year when the Chicago and Northwestern railway was built through to Pierre. In that same year Mr. John Miller stopped off at this "siding" and he took a

claim just south of the present town. To this man goes the distinction of having been the first settler in Blunt.

There was no further settlement until January, 1882. On the sixth of that month Mr. George W. Freeland, Mr. John J. Stebbins and Mr. N. E. Westover took claims in the valley. Mr. William J. Leeper also came in January, 1882. Mr. Freeland built a shack under the only tree in the valley. This "Lone Tree" is still in existence and is located on the bank of a stream south of town at the site where a mill was located a few years later.

On the 23rd of March, 1882, a group of people known as the "Illinois Colony" arrived from Lincoln, Illinois, and the several families took claims in a body northwest of Blunt. During the spring a few continued to arrive from time to time. By July 4 there were about 65 persons in the vicinity.

A postoffice was opened in Blunt July 1, 1882, with N. E. Westover as postmaster. In that same year the first store was started in Blunt by W. F. Seward of Pierre. The first Newspaper made its appearance in March, 1882 and was known as the Medicine Valley Times. The Advocate, the present Blunt paper put out its first edition July 21, 1883.

The original townsite was platted in 1882 and by April 1, lots in Stebbins and Freeland's addition were placed on sale.

According to an issue of the Advocate, dated August 4, 1883, the town of Blunt contained an unusual number of business buildings, it states that there were, "Hotels 6, groceries 12, law and land offices 11, lumber yards 9, dry goods stores 5, clothing stores 4, drug stores 4, hardware 6, saloons 5, bakeries 4," etc. The article summarizes, "This is certainly a very good business showing for a town of 1,000 inhabitants and only three months old."

The "eighties" were generally a prosperous time for the new settlement. New settlers came in large numbers, induced both by the railroad companies and the ease of obtaining new land. The trading territory surrounding Blunt was very large, extending south and west to the Missouri River, east for many miles and north for almost a hundred miles. Stages made regular trips to Le Beau, Fairbank, Clifton and other points north.

The period of greatest growth and prosperity for Blunt occurred during the decade between 1883 and 1893. The census reached a peak of 1600 inhabitants during that time. With all due respect to its able citizens and their best efforts to preserve this prosperity it is acknowledged that from 1893 to the present time there has been a very steady decline in business affairs in Blunt. Again we can draw the close parallel between the history of this particular town and a thousand other so-called "boom" towns. The peak at which it started could not be maintained for obvious natural reasons. In the first place a railroad was built extending from the East to Gettysburg, making this town a rival trading center to Blunt and drawing on much of its valuable trading territory. In the second place Pierre, only thirty miles distant became

the capital of the State and had always been the county seat of Hughes County. Many of the most enterprising of Blunt business men saw greater opportunities for wealth in the capital city and moved to Pierre. Drouth and depression soon discouraged some of the early settlers and they returned to their homes in the East or began cattle raising instead of farming.

Shortly after the turn of the century prosperity seemed to come back to the settlement in a small measure and the years 1906 to 1910 saw a period of renewed activity in the city of Blunt. In 1910 another event took place which tended further to diminish activity in Blunt. This was the building of the railroad north from Blunt to Gettysburg, relieving Blunt of her entire northern trading territory and further diminishing new enterprise in the town.

Two wars involving the United States have occurred during the life-time of Blunt, the Spanish-American and the World War. At these times of national emergency the citizens of Blunt were glad to give their utmost of life and property for their country. There are still a number of people residing here who took part in these combats and lack of time and space prevent mentioning their names here. However, we still recognize their service and failure to mention their names diminishes in no way our appreciation of their sacrifice.

A great many events of lasting importance to Blunt took place in the year 1920. A period of boom prosperity again seemed to invade the town. New settlers streamed in and land values again reached astonishing levels. The population, although much depleted since the days of early settlement reached a level to permit the establishment of a city form of government consisting of a mayor and councilmen.

The citizens of the town deemed it necessary to establish a four-year accredited high school and this was also accomplished in 1920. A new school building was erected to accommodate the enlarged program.

Some enterprising people of the town, believing in the possibility that oil could be located here, financed the drilling of a well in 1920. The attempt proved unsuccessful.

In May, 1920, a flood of quite severe proportions occurred in Blunt. A series of heavy spring rains had caused Medicine Creek to overflow, flooding almost the entire valley and causing considerable damage to homes and washing out 19 miles of track between Blunt and Pierre.

In 1921 the town voted to establish a municipal water supply system and since that time there have been fewer disastrous fires in Blunt.

Blunt has had its own history of incoming and outgoing people, the establishment of new businesses and failures and discouragements have likewise occurred. New homes have been built, old homes moved away until the present town resembles the settlement of 1883 not at all.

In the short space of this brief account it is impossible to mention the names of all the people who have helped to build the town, their efforts are duly appreciated and accounts of their activity can be found in records elsewhere.

By way of statistical information Blunt in July, 1934, is a town of approximately 500 citizens. The city government is headed by the mayor, W. S. Leeper, and the following councilmen, Gust Strom, H. Tennyson, L. Osterkamp, Arden Shipley, Lloyd Allison, G. E. Marsh and H. Glans, clerk. Blunt has four churches, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist and Christian. Other organizations of importance are the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, the Order of the Eastern Star and the Masonic Lodge.

The present school system consists of about 150 students, a superintendent and seven teachers. There are three buildings, a high school building, a grade school building and a gymnasium.

In conclusion I can only say that I consider it a great privilege to have been allowed to compile this brief history and have done my best with limited time, reference material and ability. If important events and characters have been omitted, I can only beg that I may be excused on this account.

Taken from our files of the Blunt Advocate under the dating of Saturday, July 21, 1883. This paper was a large 9 column, 4 page and entirely set by hand.

In an article headed, 'Blunt History,' we find recorded: "Many a town in the East no larger than Blunt have a history dating back to the Revolution. Usually those places have little besides their history to boast of. Blunt is willing to make the most of her history, but cares more for the busy present and the great future which she feels is just before her. One year ago the site where she now is located was a most beautiful, circular, prairie-bottom with only one or two buildings in view; three or four months ago only a few more shacks had been added, but with the opening of Spring and the influx of new settlers the new town began to take shape and most of the time has been booming. Even now during the season usually considered dull new buildings are started almost daily and merchants and hotel men report a good business.

In 1880 Mr. John Miller stopped off at the 'Siding' and took a claim just south of the present town. To him belongs the credit of having been the first settler in the vicinity of Blunt. Mr. Miller must have had a lonely time at his claim as there doesn't seem to have been any further settlement until 1882. On the 6th of January of that year Mr. George Freeland, Mr. John J. Stebbins, and Mr. N. E. Westover appear to have discovered simultaneously the advantages of this valley for a town-site and each squatted on a quarter section of land. Judge Leeper came in the same year and took up a claim close to the others.

"On the 23rd of March, 1882, what is known as the 'Illinois Colony' arrived from Lincoln, Ill., and the several families took claims in a body just northeast of Blunt. This body consisted of Damascus Zollers, wife and two boys and married daughter, Mrs. Houney; Samuel Hayes, wife and three daughters; John Zollers and wife; J. J. Houtz and wife; George Raber, wife and little girl; Orin Reed and family; Finch Reed and family; Emanuel Ireland, wife and child; L. H. Dixon,

George J. Reed, Albert Eberts, Beverly Cooper, and Frank Cunningham, in all twenty-seven persons. During the spring a few more arrived and it is estimated about sixty-five were in the vicinity around the Fourth of July. In the Fall W. F. Seward and family came from Pierre and started a store on their claim northeast. A Postoffice was ordered opened at Blunt in July, 1882, but by some mistake it was located at the Tank, and was not moved to Blunt until August, when Mr. N. F. Westover was the Postmaster.

"The depot was located at the foot of Pierre street, a box car having previously done duty as both a passenger and freight depot.

"The first regular boarding house was opened in March by Mrs. Evans, now known as the Evans House. The Metropolitan Hotel, one of the largest and finest along the Dakota Central railroad was erected at a cost of over \$7,000.

"As an indication of the character of the people flocking into the new country it is only necessary to say that they did not neglect their religious duty. Preaching was held frequently last summer by Rev. McGready and others.

"Day school was opened in May by Miss Emma Kingsbury, to whom this community has been indebted for its first school facilities.

"Almost before the boom struck Blunt, a newspaper was started in March. It was known as the Medicine Valley Times and the first proprietors were A. C. Lanish and Thos. P. Hopp. It was published in the Westover & Houtz's land office, a room 14 feet square. The paper changed hands four times in as many weeks, the present proprietor taking possession May 21. It was the latest edition in Blunt as the Blunt Advocate; the first issue of *which* lays before you."

Another heading in this edition, OUR FIRST MANUFACTORY, relates to an enterprise operated by Mr. Sargent, "at his shop, between State street and Lone Tree avenue, he has in a small way begun to make bed springs and hopes to increase his facilities."

A graded race track was built so these early settlers could settle all arguments when it came to owning fast `trotters.'

Another topic taken from this old copy, "Corn stalks the height of a man were shipped east by express. Evidently some resident is bound to convince incredulous friends in the east that Dakota is a corn country," "Drought is unknown and the crops are evidence of the exceeding proactiveness of Dakota soil." "The grasses on the hills and in the valleys are the most nutritious in the world." "As a corn raising country it is unquestionably equal to Iowa or even Illinois."

Some of the advertisements were truly `masterpieces.' One of them stated, "Disease Cured Without Medicine" which was a promotional argument in favor of the wonderments of the Magnetic Kidney Belt. Another would have it that "Hostetter's Bitters" was the only sure cure for any and all stomach disorders. Still another, "Wise's Axle Grease Never Gums." Many other small advertisements offered money to loan for proving up claims.

Abe Lincoln's Teacher

One of the only tangible remnants of Abraham Lincoln's transactions with Dakota Territory, the state still unborn, is his signature scrawled awkwardly on an imposing document appointing J. P. Kidder, associate justice, February 3, 1865. The autograph, one of many famous ones, is treasured by State Historian Lawrence K. Fox. Lincoln signed the appointment only two months before his assassination. Thus, one of his first and one of his last official acts had to do with Dakota Territory.

According to Mr. Fox, Lincoln's school teacher once lived at Blunt. Coming to the Territory and residing at Blunt, Mentor Graham passed away and was buried there. A few years ago the former schoolmaster of the Civil War President was removed from his grave at Blunt and taken to Petersburg, Illinois, for interment, near the place of Lincoln's young manhood.

The name of Lincoln has been bestowed upon a county in South Dakota. And an attempt to treat a new state out of the Black Hills region would perpetuate the name-Lincoln.

Blunt's Early Days

(From a letter by Henry Hoffman, one of the early settlers.)

In reply to your request in the "Pierie Daily Dakotan", headed "OLD TIMERS ASKED TO HELP CHILDREN", will say I came to Blunt in the spring of 1883, from Plankinton, Aurora County, Dakota Territory, for at that time the present South Dakota had not been admitted as a state, and within one month after my arrival at Blunt as a resident of that place, I had the honor of being elected Chairman of the School Board of Blunt Township. The other two members of the school board were Charles Hammond, Secretary, and Dr. Vanvelsor, Treasurer. It became our duty to plan and build three school houses. The four room school house at Blunt was the largest of the three. This was planned so that as the town increased in population an additional four rooms could be built on the south side, thus making an eight room school building with an upper and a lower hallway as the entrance to the school rooms on both upper and lower floors. This building was located in the center of an entire block, thus giving plenty of playground for the children.

During the first few years after the founding of Blunt it had an estimated population of about 3,000 persons, and was the largest business center in the central part of South Dakota. Besides many retail stores it had a wholesale grocery operated by C. N. Hawley, a wholesale hardware store, many large lumber yards, a large opera house, many hotels and boarding houses, two flour mills, several church buildings besides many large and small residence buildings.

Of distinguished persons who honored Blunt with their presence were the Sioux Chief, Drifting Goose, and his interpreter, who made the

writer a very interesting visit, in which visit he stated that he was made Chief of the Sioux Indians because he always lived an upright life.

Another distinguished person was Miss Alice Hamill, daughter of S. S. Hamill, M.A., a world renowned elocutionist and author of "New Science of Elocution", who gave a magnificent entertainment in the Blunt Opera House.

But the greatest woman according to all history-ancient and modern-of the world that honored Blunt with her presence was Miss Susan B. Anthony, who started and persisted in a movement that has now freed the women of all the principal countries of the world. She stands out as the greatest woman of all times. The writer had the honor of visiting with her while he and his family accompanied her from Blunt to Onida, Sully County, where she delivered a lecture, the greatest the writer has ever had the privilege to hear.

A Few Words of Early History at Blunt

My father came to Blunt in 1882. The U. S. Land Office was at Huron at that time. On Oct. 12, 1882, father filed on a half section of land 2 miles east of Blunt. Our homestead was NE1/4 15-112-76 and our tree claim was SW1/4 14-112-76 which we still own. We moved onto the land April 4, 1883. We came from South English, Keokuk Co., Iowa. We had 2 mules, 2 horses and 2 cows. You could get all the sod breaking you could do that year at \$6.00 per acre.

I went to school in Blunt with May Cowan, now Mrs. D. W. March, Jennie Stone, Frank and Fred Pigney, Emma Airhart, now Mrs. Tracy and Mrs. Gropengieser of Onida.

The county officers were: Commissioners G. W. Harris, P. F. McClure, S. G. Evans; Register of Deeds, J. A. McArthur; Sheriff, P. W. Comford; Treasurer, D. S. Williams; Justice of the Peace, C. N. Klienfelder and J. J. Houtz; Constables, John Bark, Nicholas Gearhard, W. H. Gray and Louis Scherzenger; Coroner, Dr. W. B. Steere. Officers in Blunt: J. C. Stebbins, Deputy Sheriff and Deputy U. S. Marshal; Constable, Orrin Reed; J. J. Houtz was Justice of the Peace.

The summer of 1883, Blunt had 2 flour mills and a broom factory run by Mr. Baker. The Opera Block was 72 x 51 with 3 store rooms downstairs. The second floor was used for the Opera House. The Metropolitan Hotel was 3 stories high and had frontage of 60 ft. on each of 2 streets. It was opened for business about the middle of June, 1883. The Dickover House, of 2 1/2 stories was open for business about May 1, 1883.

I broke the ground for the Youngblood Park where the grove now is, at the north end of main street.

Blunt had 2 banks, the Bank of Blunt and the Hughes Co. Bank, both doing a big business. Wm. Brown, real estate, later built the residence across the street from the St. Charles Hotel in Pierre. Dr. D. W. Robinson had an office in the Clapp and Son Drug store. He later came

to Pierre. N. E. Westover was first postmaster in Blunt. Chas. Burke had a real estate office. He located later at Pierre. Archie Cowan had a boot and shoe factory. He was the father of Mrs. D. W. Marsh. John and Bob Barkley had a harness and saddle factory. Kemp Bros., books and general store, later located in Pierre and built the Kemp block on Pierre Street. Wm. Rowland, A. E. Butler and Grishom Jones Hardware Co., had one building 24 x 70 with 2 stories and one 16 x 40. W. H. Gleckler and P. F. McClure, big hardware store, manager Lawrence Mauch. This firm also had a hardware store in Pierre at the same time. Holmes, Willsey furniture store later located on Pierre St., at Pierre. Schouweiler Bros., general store, all doing a prospering business.

In 1884 Blunt held a county fair. The grounds were 1 mile east of town. They had a nice round race track. There were many exhibits.

From the mouth of Medicine Creek on down the Missouri river was Indian Reservation. Chas. Barry had a log house about 3 miles down the river from Medicine Creek in the timber. At DeGrey there was Hank Jones and on the west side of the creek was Bill Gillen. In the lower end of the Big Bend Old St. John. These were all squaw men who had settled here in the early days.

In the early days we burned hay, flax straw and buffalo chips for fuel. We would gather the buffalo chips in the fall by the wagon load and store them under a dry roof for winter; when the snow was deep and we couldn't get anything else. Later we got wood from Chas. Barry, a squaw man, who lived down the river. We would go down and stay all night and sleep on the floor of his log caton and pay him \$1.00 per load for the wood. It would take us 2 days to get a load of wood. Later we used to go down to the mouth of Chapelle Creek and get wood from Bill Gillan, also from Wm. Ashley Jones, a rebel soldier who used to give us "hell" if we ever mentioned a Union soldier; so we had to be a little careful what we said when we were around where this old devil was. He had killed several poor fellows in his time just because they had let their tongue run away with them.

In 1896 we had an awful hard winter, the snow was over two feet on the level. You couldn't get anywhere, if you ever got off the main trail.

The first couple in Blunt, to be made man and wife was in the shade of the old lone tree, which was a cottonwood.

We had a neighbor who had a claim about 11½ miles south of us. He had just an old shack, so he dug a little hole about 2 ft. square and 3 feet deep and put up a sign with this inscription on it: "These improvements might be better, and the water might be wetter, this hole will answer as a well even if water is not to be found this side of hell."

The Hughes County Courthouse was built in 1883 at Pierre, S. D. The corner stone was laid by the Odd Fellows lodge of Pierre and H. J. Simms was the master of ceremonies. He was a wholesale and retail liquor dealer and his place of business was on Pierre Street about where the Thomas Grocery is now. Pierre had street cars propelled by one

little mule, running from the Locke Hotel to East Pierre on Dakota Ave. Another line ran from the Locke Hotel one block west and then up the hill to Capitol Ave. This car was propelled by two little mules. All cars ran until 11 P. M.

Pierre had a number of large hotels. Among them was the North Western, a three story building, which was where the Harding Garage now stands. The Grand Pacific where the Red Owl Store now stands. The Park Hotel, which is the old Hospital building at this time; the Wells House of three stories which was about 6 blocks east of the

-By Gus Kleinschmidt, March 8, 1937.



Metropolitan Hotel, referred to in the previous article.

The Blunt Oil Well

(By Celia Carey)

During the prosperous days of 1921-1922 promise of another boom came to Blunt in the promotion of the Blunt Oil Well. A Mr. Adams fostered the survey of the formations about Blunt and settled upon a site close to the railroad right of way about a quarter of a mile east of Blunt as the location of the oil dome which would bring wealth. The company was organized. Stock was sold, and more stock. Leases were made. People had visions of Blunt rising like the mushroom cities of the Oklahoma oil fields from a population of 600 people one day to a seething metropolis of 30,000 the next. The derrick was erected and engines and machinery were placed in readiness for drilling to begin.

On the day of the breaking of the ground a "Spudding In Day" celebration was held. People from the whole surrounding country came. A football game, bands, a stunting aeroplane, a parachute drop, and a barbecue were some of the events of the day. We children expected to see at any time a great fountain of oil burst from the top of the derrick.

The promoters continued to sell stock far and wide until all prospects had been urged to profit in this almost patriotic enterprise. But the oil did not appear nor has it to this day appeared.

Mr. Adams has gone in search of more capital, the stock holders have their worthless stock, and the derrick is in ruins. Another boom bubble has burst.

The Great Blizzard

(Told by Mrs. E. F. Mercer to Mary Schroer)

Although the morning of January 12th, 1888, had seemed to promise a beautifully mild winter day a few flakes of snow began falling before the Mercer children were ready to leave for school. Mr. Mercer told the children to wait a few minutes to see what the weather would be. In the few minutes all possibility of going to school had passed. The few flakes had become myriads, and the roaring north west gale had blown the snow into a raging sea of white darkness. The blizzard of "'88'" had begun.

Mr. Mercer and two of the boys went out of the house a short way, perhaps to the barn. In trying to come back to the house the boys missed the building and ran into the hitching post beyond. Considering carefully what direction to go they tried again and managed to hit the house. Their father had run into the pump nearer to the house and was able to find his way to the door.

Mr. Blakney, a teacher in a school a bit east of Blunt, wanted to get home to his wife because she was alone and would worry about him. He started and although at first he could see a little way ahead, he soon could see nothing but the whirling blinding snow. Taking his handkerchief he held it before him so he could tell which way the wind was blowing, because he knew it was blowing toward his home. By watching the handkerchief as a guide he struggled on until he stumbled against something which he knew was back of the house. Then he succeeded in crawling into the house.

Farther south east some of the school children had reached school before the storm struck. Many of them had to stay at the school for two or three days before they were able to leave.

A Pioneer of 1895

The E. E. Simmons' family came to Blunt in 1895. They hauled their household goods to their farm west of Blunt in a wagon.

Before they could get their furniture in the house, they were

surprised by a blizzard not a very bad one to the people who lived here, but to a native of Ohio it seemed very severe.

Mr. Simmons operated a store in Blunt for about three years. The Indians came in to buy supplies. He says that he dreaded seeing a band of them arrive. They would stand looking at the shelves, see something they wanted and point at it. They never spoke a word of English. On being grunted at by the father, a small Indian child would state what was wanted. The Indians paid for the articles as they got them, then ran out side and counted their money.

Mr. Simmons also remembers when the Texas Longhorns roamed through the streets of the town, going to the artesian well to drink.

He tells of an amusing incident, when a bronco and his rider went bucking into the barber shop where Mr. Beebe, an old settler was getting a shave. Mr. Beebe jumped out of the chair, towel and lather flying, to chase them out.

Upon being asked why Blunt was located here instead of several miles east where a water tank that was called "Clear Water" was located, Mr. Simmons said that three prominent ranchers, one of them the aforementioned Mr. Beebe, had ranches here. They got together and persuaded the people to settle in Blunt.

-Thelma Frazier.

An Experience of the E. F. Mercer Family

The Mercer family came to Hughes County in April, 1883. They settled on their claim three miles east of Blunt, along the side of the road which is known now as U.S. Highway, No. 14. On this farm Mrs. Mercer and two of her sons live at the present time.

Probably, the most prominent feature of that time was Bell's idea to murder Small. Small and Bell were two agents. Bell had his residence in Harrold, while Small stayed in Blunt. One day they agreed upon signing some papers. They met just east of the Mercer homestead. While Small was signing the document, Mr. Bell went to his wagon, got his hatchet, and then proceeded in the killing of Small. He wrapped Small's body in a blanket and buried him in a plowed field nearby.

Many days passed and the people of Blunt were very inquisitive about the disappearance of Small. A detective was secured to investigate the matter. He come out here, but kept the authority of the detective business a secret. As the detective was suspicious of Mr. Bell, he kept his residence in Harrold, near Bell's home. The detective pretended as though he had committed a murder. He had killed a man by the name of Small. Bell was then arrested and taken to Pierre, to the jail. After Bell was taken to Pierre, a riot broke out in Blunt and Harrold which resulted in a mob going to Pierre. The mob took hatchets and broke in the jail door. They took Bell captive. Bell was hung over the flag pole, in the court yard.

Mrs. Mercer recalls that at one time there were large fair grounds east of Blunt. The grounds had a large race track. There were many women riders. Although the people of those days did not have many vegetables, fruits and other things to exhibit, the women displayed beautiful fancy work.

-Florence Jane, Jennietta Shore, Gerald Shore.

Early Pioneer Days

Mrs. Thomas Whalen endured many hardships in the early days of Hughes County. She lived in a dugout 10 miles south of Blunt. The dugout was built similar to a cave with a half-story house made over the top.

While living in this humble home, she experienced a severe blizzard which lasted two days in 1888. The snow was so thick that her husband took a clothesline, fastened one end to the dugout, and, after a long search for the barn, connected the other end of the line to the barn so he would be able to find his way back. In this terrible storm they lost nearly all their cattle. No train came from Huron for 105 days following this blizzard.

In those days everyone let his cattle run all over the prairie, and hired men to herd. During blizzards many cattle perished, because they had no shelter. The round-ups, where all cattle owners branded their cattle, were exciting occasions. Here the cowboys showed their great skill in catching wild, long-horned cattle.

Mrs. Whalen also remembered many very cold winters when the people had to wrap their feet with canvas to keep them from freezing. There was no wood and they had no money to buy coal so they had to resort to using cow chips and hay for fuel.

Mrs. John Miles was another pioneer lady who experienced many hardships. She related a very destructive fire started northwest of Okobojo in 1889 and swept through Hughes county down to the Missouri River. A wind blowing eighty miles, an hour forced the flames along through the tall buffalo grass leaving behind a path of ruin. It took the fire only forty-five minutes to reach the river. Mrs. Miles told about Annie Sweeney who was alone on her father's farm. Annie saw the fire approaching and ran to free the stock, but before she had time to make her escape after finishing her mission the fire had surrounded the place and she perished with the stock. In memory of this girl's death a song was written telling of her brave attempt to free the cattle and escape, herself.

Many other such raging fires were witnessed by this pioneer woman. Such prairie fires were common occurrences in early days.

The experiences of these two women give a picture of only a few of the hardships suffered by the pioneers of Dakota Territory.

Sylvia Edge and Dorothy Wecker.

Breaking Sod On The Prairies-Tabor

(The Following Is A Reference Made To Hughes County In This Book)

Behind the little village, which we learned was named Blunt, massive hills rose one over the other. The road seemed endless, as we wended our way upward to the summit of what we afterward learned was called a "butte," one of a series of hills that, following the Missouri river, spread eastward until merged into the prairies.

When we reached the top, we found ourselves facing a country almost as flat as a table, which extended north and east as far as we could see. We had no trouble in following the road, as: it was the only mark of man or beast in evidence. Not a house, not a barn was in sight; not a furrow of plowed land. Mile after mile we drove, and hour after hour!

Often, we would stop and get out of the buggy to rest and to pick prairie flowers; blossoms that we never before had seen. But what interested us most were the many buffalo skeletons, laid out, as it were, to bleach like white sheets upon the green prairies, mute evidence of an almost extinct form of life. Some of these skeletons were almost intact; the teeth in the jaws were unloosened, while great mats of coarse hair still clung to the skulls between the horns.

At one stop in particular, the feeling that perhaps the foot of white man never had trodden these virgin plains took possession of us and we felt that we were on holy ground. The prairie grass, swaying in the summer wind, gave the wide expanse of the country the semblance of a vast ocean, the waves of which never were at rest. I trembled with fear at the immensity of it all and wondered what this strange country held for us. I seemed in danger of losing all sense of personal identity, merged, as it were, into the eternal vastness of space.

The Besancons

H. O. Besancon was one of the real pioneers of Hughes county, coming west from New York in 1883 for his wife's health, and locating at Harrold where he established the Harrold Star, a live paper that contributed its full share toward attracting settlers to this county. Mrs. Besancon did not regain her health and died that fall, being the first woman buried at Harrold.

In 1893 Mr. Besancon moved to Blunt and bought the Advocate from W. S. Ingham who had been preceded as publisher by George Schlosser. He continued as publisher of the Advocate from 1893 until his death in 1915, when the work was taken up by his son, C. E. Besancon who continued as editor and publisher until 1927 when he was succeeded by Harold Felhaber, and the following year C. E. and his wife (formerly Fern Dristy) and their children, Betty and Clark, moved to Rapid City where Claire has since been engaged in commercial printing until the first of this year when he became deputy auditor of Pennington county.

H. O. Besancon married Mrs. Lucinda Helm in 1886, and a few years

after her death married, in 1908, Mrs. Mary Holmes, a pioneer woman who located in Hyde county among the earliest settlers. Mrs. Besancon spent the last six years of her life at the State Soldiers' Home at Hot Springs, from where she frequently visited the Besancon home in Rapid City. She passed away March 17, 1936,

There were few projects of a community nature that required attention in the early days of Harrold and Blunt that did not receive an impetus from the ready pen and the helping hand of H. O. Besancon.

The Barbecue

(Written by Regina Hoefer from information given her by
Mrs. E. F. Mercer)

In 1885 during the boom days in Blunt a big celebration was held at which one of the main attractions for the interested immigrants from the East was an Indian War Dance. Over fifty Sioux braves took part in the dance and while many of the warriors wore white and Indian scalps on their belts they were not on the war path. As pay for the part they took in the celebration the Indians were given a beef by the town people. After beating the animal to death the Indians cooked it and partook of the feast.

The Unfinished Railroad

(Written by Mary Schroer from information given her by
Mrs. E. F. Mercer)

For a few years during the "Eighties" Blunt was thrilled with the prospect of having a second railroad build a line through the city. A group of men, believed by some to be carpetbaggers, organized the Duluth, Pierre, and Black Hills Railroad Company to build a railroad from Duluth through Aberdeen, Blunt and to Pierre. The company hoped to get money and grants of land from the United States government. The grade was actually completed most of the way from Aberdeen to Pierre but no rails were ever laid, either because the boom broke or the road was given up. The old grade still stands, rising in some places like long hills behind which stock find kindly shelter from wintry winds, and making in other places deep cuts in the hills.

The Garver Family

The Garver family came to Dakota and to Blunt, May 26. 1883. The morning of the 27th, snow fell and during the day we had several inches, which was rather a dismal welcome to strangers in a strange land. We obtained a quarter of land as our preemption two miles north of town. It was covered up by another settler who intended to homestead it later. We had a two-room house and a good well and altogether we felt very prosperous. We knew full well what pioneering meant, though we never suffered, we had hardships to endure.

Blunt was a busy little town. All lines of business were well represented. We had near neighbors on almost every quarter of land; water was a great draw-back many had to haul it a long distance.

Our land was near the Sully county line, and the mail route over which all freight was hauled to Sully and Potter counties.

We were all happy and contented. Our chief enjoyment was going to town Saturday and going to Sunday school in a rural school house. We were not blessed with an abundance of wealth. We were just one great family willing to help each other in every way possible. Times were hard and trying.

We could usually raise vegetables. We called the little purple top turnips, Dakota apples, and ate them with great relish. We were never annoyed by Indians; it was a rare treat to come to town the 4th of July when they would put on some kind of entertainment for us.

--As dictated to Robert Tjomsland, a student.

Adventures of William Hopkins

William Hopkins arrived in Hughes County Mar. 12, 1883. Blunt at this time was a very small town with only three buildings and one small tree. Two buildings were owned by N. E. Westover, one he used as a storage place for a small amount of lumber which he sold to settlers, the other was a post office. The other building, making the third in town, was owned by "O1" Riggle, and he used it as a drug store and hotel, if you wished to sleep in a chair, on the counter, or on the floor. Mr. Hopkins wanted a place to sleep, finding all the best places on the counter and in the chairs occupied, he had to sleep on the floor. In the morning lie had a breakfast which consisted of a piece of beef and a slice of bread; he paid a dollar for bed and breakfast.

When Mr. Hopkins came he brought 2 mules, 1 cow, 1 horse, and 2 chickens. As he had to go to Pierre for lumber to build his house, he hired a young man to take his cow and horse to his brother's ranch three miles north of Blunt. Taking his two mules and a wagon he started on a two day's trip to Pierre for lumber.

When he came back, he started at once to build a dug out. First he dug a hole 14 feet square and 3 feet deep. Other this he raised a sod top and relined the whole house with the lumber. When he had completed the walls and ceiling, he had only a few boards left; so he covered the floor with straw and rag rugs. One heavy door was the means of entering, and one window high in the wall, was the only way of lighting.

The Hopkins family had to go to Pierre to obtain food and clothing. When money became short, Mr. Hopkins rented his mules to Mr. White who was breaking sod between Pierre and Blunt. He received seven dollars and twenty cents a day for their use.

In 1885 there were many wild animals: badgers, deer, antelope, coyotes, wild cats, and other animals.

Very early in the morning on May 5, 1887, Mr. Hopkins and Arden Shipley started in a wagon, drawn by mules, to the Black Hills in search for a better place to settle. When they were just a few miles from Blunt, a terrible blizzard came up before they could get to shelter; they turned their wagon over and lay under it.

The blizzard left so much snow that the crude road to the Black Hills was blocked; so they returned to Blunt.

-Extracts from Evelyn Nesheim, Alma Trueper, and Ellen Nesheim

Experiences of Ed Carey

In the fall of 1882, Mr. Carey brought his family and worldly possessions to Blunt. At that time, Blunt consisted of a depot. Mr. Carey and his family solved their difficulty by sleeping all night in the box car containing their furniture. The next morning they went to Harrold. There *they* lived in a dugout. Nevertheless, the Careys called this "home" for three months. They built a new home southeast of Blunt-a sod house with a wooden roof and real windows! They constructed a rickety framework of 2 x 4's and built a roof of planks, extending it over the sides. Then they piled blocks of sod along the walls upward to reach the roof leaving space for windows. This was much better than a dugout. It was comparatively warm, although Mr. Carey tells of how they had to twist hay for fuel.

Mr. Carey, although he did not actually fight the Indians, was thoroughly frightened by them. One day, word came to him that Indians were near, holding a series of war dances. Mr Carey took his wife and children and as many personal belongings as possible and stayed concealed in a nearby dugout overnight. Fortunately, the Indians didn't molest them, but their nearness to the wild redskins had caused terror to reign in the Carey family for a while.

Kerosene lamps were not very common and the Carey family had a device that they used in making candles; they would kill a beef and melt the tallow then pour it into the device used, and in this way, they could make nine candles at one time.

Mr. Carey tended fifty head of cattle for a man in Sioux City; after a short time he started into the cattle business for himself; he shipped in over four hundred head of cattle. He let them graze on land that is now a part of Blunt.

The Carey children received their high school education in Blunt, and all of them attended college.

Mr. Carey bought a big house in town, and the Carey family moved into this home about 1920. It was in this home that Mrs. Carey passed away.

-Grace Tennyson and Laura Albertus.

When Mr. Fred Pigney Moved to Blunt

In the year of 1885 Fred Pigney moved to Blunt. He came to this city by train. Blunt had been settled two years.

A great amount of snow fell in 1888. There was so much that the trains were unable to run. It was impossible to travel by horse and wagon. Whenever anyone wished to go any place he had to go by horse and sled. Mail was carried from city to city by the section men. Many people had to burn hay. Mr. Pigney, however, was fortunate enough in having coal to burn.

-Thera Belle Gray.

What Happened to J. W. Pyne

J. W. Pyne came from Danville, Ill., to Blunt in 1883. While here he met with many hardships, finally being forced to make his living by putting up hay.

Later he moved to Canning but here the problem of earning a living was not much easier than in Blunt. However, in 1884 he secured a contract from George Harris giving him the right to build a first class flour mill. Because there was no power to run his mill, he had to build a dam. This dam was built near a large spring which furnished the water power. John Kramer shoveled the first dirt for the structure. In order to complete this, it was necessary to tunnel about 400 feet through a hill. This was done entirely by hand. The dirt being carried out of the tunnel with wheelbarrows. When the mill was completed in 1885, it was a substantial frame structure, five stories high. It remained in operation 2 months. One night a severe rain storm loosened the bluff and a landslide destroyed the mill. Estal Pyne was in the building when it collapsed but escaped with a few minor scratches.

In the place of the flour mill Pyne built a small feed mill which operated several years and finally it was struck by lightning.

Pyne left Canning in 1893 to go to Leavensworth, Kansas, where he died destitute.-Russell Samco.



Ree Pottery

Childhood of Blunt Lady Recalls Yankton Capitol

Mrs. Anna Marsh, one of Blunt's oldest and finest citizens, relates that her grandfather, Melancthon Hoyt, built the building at Yankton which housed the first meeting of the Territorial Council which was held in 1862. It was used as a meeting place of this group until the first capitol budding was erected. It was also used as a residence, for school classes and church services.

From the picture she has, the building would not appear to be over 20x28 feet, a story and a half high, with a small leanto built on the rear.

Mrs. Marsh, then 5 years of age, arrived in Yankton in the spring of 1865, making the trip from Sioux City by boat. She recalls with amusement that the trip took several days. One reason for the snail-like speed was that the owner of the boat was under contract with the government at \$100 per day and was in no great hurry to terminate the journey.

Dr. William Jayne, family physician for Abraham Lincoln, was the first territorial governor of Dakota.

L. J. Walker Comes for Two Weeks; Stays 25 Years

Last Saturday night, L. J. Walker completed twenty-five years as Agent for the Northwestern Railroad. Mr. Walker tells us that when he came here he was to stay for two weeks and then be sent on to some other town, but it looks like it has been a long two weeks. We think that Mr. Walker has set a record for some of the younger men on the road to look up to and try to better it if they can.

During Mr. Walker's stay here he has taken active part in all the activities of the community. He has served on the City Council and at the present time is, the Mayor of Blunt. Two of his children have grown up and graduated from the local school and are now attending the U. S.D.

We hope that Mr. Walker and his family will stay in Blunt as long as he is in service with the Northwestern Railroad and that he will make this city his home when he retires.

The Advocate joins with Mr. Walker's many friends in wishing him many more happy years in Blunt. -Advocate, 1936.

Workmen Demolish Old Hotel, Landmark

The Blunt Advocate-Oct. 1, 1936

Workmen are busy this week tearing down the old Blunt Hotel building, which is one of the oldest landmarks in Blunt and incidently, in Hughes county.

Erected (luring the 'land boom' in 1883, the old hotel building was among the very first substantially constructed buildings in Blunt. During the early 80's this rooming place had the reputation of being one of the finest along the railroad, offering city accommodations at a reasonable rate.

A few years after its erection the Blunt Hotel came under the able management of A. D. Tilton and it flourished in prosperity up until some dozen years of the 20th century when railroad travel began to decline. Year after year saw less patronage until about eight years ago it housed its last customer, unless for an occasional wayward tramp. Since that time the effects of time and weather have taken toll on the old landmark until it had become an eye-sore to Blunt's main street. The county having taken title to the property by virtue of tax deed, sold it recently and the lumber is being salvaged.

See-Back-Agraph

From Blunt Advocate files, Sept. 22, 1883

Locals

The Christianized Indians at the camp meeting in Peoria Bottom last Sunday partook of the Lord's Supper and soon after joined in a dog feast.

The corner stone of the court house at Pierre is to be laid this afternoon.

The Pierre Recorder says hereafter claim-jumpers will do well to give Blunt a wide berth.

In the ads we find mention of: Full Suits for \$3, \$4, and \$6, Sugar 10c per pound, Bacon 10c, Coffee 17c, and so on.

Opening The Opera House

The event in Blunt this week has been the formal opening of Stebbins' Opera House Monday by the Peerless Dramatic Company. A grand Ball followed Tuesday night's performance.

The dress and manners of the people showed wealth and refinement with all patrons appearing in full evening dress.

The curtain contains a life size painting of a Roman chariot drawn by three foaming steeds.



An Early Denizen of the Prairie